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STATE FOR NEA/PI, NEA/ARP, NEA/PPD, ECA/A/E/USS (AVANLOON), ECA/A/L  
(JCONNERLEY)  
ABU DHABI FOR MEPI (HWECHSEL, MHOPKINS)

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEPIC 5: MEPI MEETS CHANGE, CHALLENGES AND SUCCESS  
IN KUWAIT (MEPI Quarterly Report)

Ref: A) Kuwait 2445 - MEPI-Making a Real Difference in Women's  
Political Participation  
B) Kuwait 1986 - Freedom Agenda: MEPI, BMENA and Exchanges Basis  
of Heavy USG Support for Kuwaiti Women as Election Nears  
C) Kuwait 1889 - Freedom Agenda: Refining Strategies to Promote  
Democratic Reform  
D) Kuwait 1224 - MEPIC 4  
E) Kuwait 605 - MEPIC 3  
F) Kuwait 540 - Freedom Agenda: Post Funded MEPI Projects Promote  
Equality for Kuwaiti Women  
G) 05 Kuwait 4144 - MEPIC 2  
H) 05 Kuwait 2732 - MEPIC 1  
I) 05 Kuwait 2091 - Democratic Reform Strategies to Support the  
Freedom Agenda

Sensitive but unclassified. Not for internet distribution.

11. (SBU) Summary: This quarterly report covers key MEPI  
developments in Kuwait during FY06Q3. The Amir's dissolution of the  
National Assembly on May 21 and the ensuing elections held on June  
29 compelled a change in the scope of the Mission's MEPI programming  
for the quarter as well as for the coming year. MEPI projects  
responded to the rapidly changing political environment by providing  
training to journalists covering the elections and logistical and  
strategic support to female voters and candidates. Ongoing  
MEPI-funded student programs, i.e., the Access English  
Microscholarship and INJAZ/Junior Achievement Programs concluded  
with outstanding results. As for Small Grants, four FY06 grants  
were tentatively-approved (totaling \$100,203) and all FY05 Small  
Grants projects are expected to be fulfilled during FY06Q4. MEPI  
opportunities continue to grow in Kuwait, with an active promotion  
of My Arabic Library, Arab Civitas programs and university  
partnerships. Given the new political landscape in Kuwait, MEPI  
objectives for the next year will have to be adapted in pursuit of  
Freedom Agenda goals. End Summary.

Spontaneous Political Events Evoke Solid Response  
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12. (SBU) On May 21, 2006, Kuwait's Amir exercised his  
constitutional right to dissolve the National Assembly and scheduled  
parliamentary elections for June 29, 2006. The snap election was  
the first in Kuwait's history in which women could vote and compete  
for seats in the National Assembly. The Assembly's dissolution and  
early elections disrupted the trajectory of in-country MEPI  
democracy support initiatives and required the Embassy to reschedule  
and hold within a 30-day period election and campaign-training  
efforts for women, journalists and youth that had been planned to  
take place well into 2007. While no women were elected, female  
Kuwaitis went to the polls in significant numbers and were  
noticeably active in various campaigns supporting both liberal and

conservative candidates. Moreover, contestants from all parts of Kuwait's political spectrum actively pursued support from women voters in recognition of influence women now wield on Kuwait's political process.

#### MEPI Visitor Advances MEPI Projects

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13. (SBU) Towards the end of the quarter, the Embassy hosted the visit of MEPI Regional Office Director from Abu Dhabi Hans Wechsel on June 13 and 14. Mr. Wechsel discussed the progress of MEPI in Kuwait with the Embassy's working group and held consultations with the following potential and current MEPI grantees:

--Dr. Mishaal Al-Mishaan, Chairman of Kuwait Environmental Protection Society (KEPS), to review the organization's Standing Program Announcement project implementation,  
--Mr. Faisal Al-Qanai, Secretary General of the Kuwait Journalists Association, to coordinate MEPI small grant-funded journalist training workshop (details below), and  
--Ms. Kenza Agertit, NDI representative implementing an election support project during the campaign period.

#### FY05 Small Grants Projects Nearing Completion

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14. (SBU) During the third quarter of FY06, members of the Embassy's MEPI team worked closely with one small grant project, implemented by CineMagic, to encourage forward movement on the project as well as with the organizers of the pending LoYAC project:

a) CineMagic's Civic-Minded Film Project continued its activities throughout the third quarter of FY06. The key element of the

project was the production process that highlighted teamwork, men and women working together, and democratic dialogue--which amounted to a unique experience for the project participants. While the final four of 10 students were to complete their projects by mid-June, the deadline was renegotiated to July due to difficulties coordinating with the students' university schedules. This Cinemagic project is expected to end in the fourth quarter of FY06.

b) The Lothan Youth Achievement Center (LoYAC) project on summer entrepreneurship training for youth began implementation in late June and early July 2006. LoYAC included the MEPI logo in its advertising in Kuwait's Arabic and English newspapers and in its summer program brochure. The project is to be completed before the end of August 2006.

#### FY06 Small Grants - Immediate Successes, Some on Hold

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15. (SBU) Throughout FY06, the Embassy actively scouted prospective applicants for the MEPI Small Grants program, through personal contact and placement of MEPI announcements on the Embassy's web site and in the Arabic press. Consequently, the MEPI working group reviewed, approved, and forwarded five small grant proposals to the Abu Dhabi Office. Of the five projects, four were tentatively approved for a total of \$100,203. The status of each application follows:

a) Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) "Workshop for Journalists Covering Elections" - Approved and finalized. At the height of campaign fever in Kuwait, the University of Missouri, under a Post-approved MEPI small grant, concluded a timely, two-day seminar on June 20 to improve the skills of Kuwaiti journalists covering elections. KJA with support from Embassy Public Affairs coordinated the seminar. Approximately 25 reporters representing all of the Arabic- and English-language dailies as well as the public news service KUNA attended the seminar conducted by a University of Missouri journalism professor. Attendees praised the utility of the workshop, which identified challenges Kuwaiti journalists face in covering elections. Other topics explored were techniques for interviewing candidates, managing rumors, and preparing for Election Day coverage. Participants expressed enthusiasm throughout the program, by asking pertinent questions, volunteering to lead

small-group discussions, and working on a code of election coverage ethics to present to the journalism association leadership. The project achieved significant coverage in the Arabic-language press. Post appreciates the Regional Office's recommendation for Kuwait of this program that had been previously conducted in another country. Post welcomes other suggestions of activities that can be easily duplicated.

b) The Women's Network "Voter Education Flyer" - Approved and finalized. Originally designed as a political awareness campaign with a nine-month implementation period, this project featured development of voter education materials that explained the electoral process and encouraged women to vote. In response to the announcement of the June 29 election, the concept was revised rapidly to produce 200,000 copies of a one-page leaflet for hand distribution to a target audience of female first-time voters.

c) LoYAC "Student Entrepreneurship Training" - Approved pending revisions. MEPI Regional Office suggested amendments to the applicant and awaits a response. Post plans to follow up with the applicant.

d) Society for Study and Leadership "Leadership Training for Women" - Approved pending revisions. The MEPI Regional Office suggested amendments to the applicant and awaits a response. Post has and will continue to follow up with the applicant.

e) Dr. Suad Al-Tararwah "Family Law Project" - Application tabled. The MEPI Regional Office assessed this proposal as duplicative of the Freedom House project that recently started activities in Kuwait. Post has been in contact with Freedom House representatives and encouraged them to consult and work with Dr. Al-Tararwah as well as an FY05 MEPI grantee who also examined laws that discriminate against women. Post is also working with Dr. Tararwah on a revised proposal to promote judicial reform.

#### In-Country Program Successes

16. (SBU) Three large-scale MEPI-funded projects continued operations and two new projects initiated activities during FY06Q3:

a) The MEPI-funded English Access Microscholarship Program began in November 2005 and concluded at the end of June 2006. AMIDEAST

implemented the program in Kuwait with 195 non-elite Kuwaiti ninth- and tenth-graders participating in the six-month-long English language program, in close collaboration with the Embassy. Public Affairs staff fully integrated Access participants into a number of the Embassy's public diplomacy activities, including music concerts, movie nights, and speaker programs. To complement Access's success, 36 program participants will participate in an Access summer program in Kuwait, 20 top students will attend a four-week summer language camp in the U.S. funded by Chevron, and two will travel to the U.S. as part of a summer workshop program.

b) During FY06Q2, INJAZ/Junior Achievement initiated its pilot "Company Program" in Kuwait. Students in the program organized and operated a small business enterprise under the mentorship of male and female Kuwaiti business executives. They learned the functions of a company and the operation and benefits of the free enterprise system. Hailing from three public schools and five private schools, 266 Kuwaiti students joined the pilot program. From the private schools (American School of Kuwait, American Creative Academy and Bayan Bilingual School), 155 students participated. The state-operated public schools, (including two girls' schools and three boys' schools), contributed 111 participants. In June, INJAZ hosted a competition for the 165 student participants in the Company Program. The students were organized into nine teams, each starting with initial capital of 75 KD (\$257), a sum of 675 KD (\$2,312). Following the competition, the students' companies had earned a reported 30,700 KD (\$105,137). This highly successful pilot program will resume in September.

c) NDI continued its support for women's political participation in Kuwait by conducting extensive election training as prelude to the June 29 election. Exhibiting vast flexibility in the compressed

period available, NDI brought in campaign experts from the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East to work with women candidates. NDI also coordinated with local organizations and the UNDP on voter awareness and youth groups to develop strategies to increase the participation of young people as voters and campaign volunteers. Embassy personnel visiting election tents during the campaign period reported seeing more than 1,500 women in possession of well-designed, attractive, and informative handouts partially funded by NDI with MEPI funds. Three clear best practices emerged. First, having a native Arabic speaker conduct the training sessions was ideal. Second, the immediacy of the election timeframe required a high degree of adaptability of NDI trainers who were extremely adept at adjusting priorities and making swift decisions with limited consultation with Washington headquarters. Third, NDI engaged experts with concrete experience in campaign training from countries in the region or from Europe who successfully transferred their skills to the participants. Kuwait's MEPI team applauds NDI's effective and appropriate strategies. Multiple organizations converging on Kuwait during the campaign period would have been burdensome and counterproductive.

d) "My Arabic Library" made its debut in Kuwait on May 23 and 24 when Scholastic Vice President Carol Sakoian promoted the Arabic-language children's books in Kuwait. The MEPI-funded translations to Arabic of this collection of children's books received an enthusiastic response. Ms. Sakoian and Embassy Public Affairs staff met with officials at the Ministry of Education, Kuwait Teachers Society, and Kuwait University's College of Education, each of whom received sample sets. Embassy will follow up with these Kuwaiti educational institutions regarding their decisions.

e) In early May, Public Affairs forwarded the U.S.-Middle East University Partnerships Program announcement to Kuwait University, American University of Kuwait (AUK), Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), and Arab Open University. As a result, two Kuwaiti institutions have been included in one single-country and one regional project in the program. Southern Methodist University will collaborate with Kuwait University's College for Women to enhance the professional development of the faculty in the area of Information Technology, while MIT will team up with nine Arab universities, including GUST in Kuwait, to work with high school teachers to foster creative critical thinking in high school math classes. There is keen interest by other universities in Kuwait to develop additional partnerships in the future.

#### Exchanges and Conferences

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17. (SBU) The Embassy's MEPI working group has continued to offer support to MEPI regional and global activities, exchanges and conferences by recruiting, selecting, and nominating appropriate Kuwaiti participants. The following Kuwaitis were nominated for or took part in the listed MEPI exchange programs and/or regional

conferences during FY06Q2:

#### 1A. Regional Conference Participants:

1) MEPI-supported Sana'a Conference on Democracy, Political Reforms and Freedom of Expression, Yemen (June 25-26, 2006):  
-Dr. Nada Al-Mutawa, Kuwait University

2) Several Kuwaitis reportedly participated in a MEPI Food Safety Forum in June in Bahrain. Regrettably, Post played no role in extending the invitations and has not received confirmation of Kuwaiti participation.

#### 1B. New MEPI Exchange Program Alumni:

1) MEPI U.S. Business Internship Program for Young Middle Eastern Women (November 2005 - April 2006):  
-Ms. Alia Al-Mutawa, Assistant in Administration Marketing, Petrochemical Industries Company  
-Ms. Reem Al-Hajri, Senior Investment Officer, KIPCO Asset Management Company

2) Middle East Entrepreneur Training in the United States--MEET

U.S. (March - April 2006):

-Manal Al-Husaini, General Manager and owner of Comtec Trading Corporation

-Wafa Al-Rasheed, Technical Director at the Kuwait Stock Exchange

3) MEPI-USPTO U.S. Study Tour for Middle East Region Public Law Librarians on Protecting Intellectual Property Rights (June 2006):

-Ms. Bashayer Al-Randi, Kuwait University

-Ms. May Al-Kulaib, Kuwait University

#### 1C. Nominated Participants:

1) Three Kuwaitis were nominated to participate in the Democracy and Election Management Institute scheduled for June 2006 but chose not to attend because of the elections:

-Mr. Ali Murad, Director of the Elections Department at the Ministry of Interior

-Dr. Jassem Karam, Kuwait University

-Dr. Ali Al-Zuabi, Kuwait University

2) Following the Embassy's promotion of the MEPI Independent Media Project to all Kuwaiti media outlets, three Kuwaiti publications applied with the following results:

-Mr. Ahmed Adly, Bazaar Magazine, application rejected (not short-listed) by MEPI

-Mr. Ahmed Al-Ghanim, Thouq Magazine, application pending

-Ms. Hadia Ghezali, Vogue Arabia, a new independent magazine that would focus on women's issues, application pending

3) Eight women candidates and their campaign managers were scheduled to participate in an International Republican Institute (IRI)- organized "Partners in Participation campaign academy in Dubai in early June. Following the dissolution of Parliament and the scheduling of elections, all opted to remain in Kuwait and work on their campaigns. The NDI project helped to fill the gap and several of the women, while not winning parliamentary seats, earned more votes than their male competitors in the same districts.

#### 1D. Conference Follow-up Activities:

1) Seized with the issue of Amiri succession, candidates for the February 4-5, 2006 Arab Civitas Conference in Jordan were difficult to identify. However, using NEA/PPD funding Embassy Kuwait sent two participants. In mid-April, Public Affairs staff presented the director general of the English Language Department of Kuwait's Ministry of Education with full documentation of the civic education conference. The Ministry official indicated strong interest in learning more and agreed to review these materials to determine which elements, if any, to incorporate into the Kuwaiti public school curriculum. Arab Civitas officials sought consultations in Kuwait at the end of June, but due to the pending elections and the unavailability of appropriate interlocutors, the visit was postponed.

Next Year -- New Targets, New Focus

18. (SBU) The sudden dissolution of the Kuwaiti Parliament has driven the Kuwait MEPI team to re-evaluate and revise the next year of MEPI program objectives. The following six prime areas reflect the new focus under consideration:

a) Advocacy programs to help women and youth effectively lobby

elected and appointed governmental bodies

b) Promotion of civic education in the state-operated public school system in partnership with the Ministry of Education

c) Encouraging the establishment of university linkages between Kuwaiti and American educational institutions

d) Supporting reform in the legal/judicial field and training opportunities for parliamentarians and their staffs

e) Advancing youth engagement in politics and leadership skill development, by introducing a mock parliament project

f) Continuing political participation training for women and youth, based on the election results and lessons learned from the recent electoral proceedings.

Promoting Best Practices



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¶9. (SBU) The Embassy's experience with the NDI and journalism projects demonstrated that effective MEPI projects in one country or region might be replicated successfully in others. Increased dialogue and sharing of best practices and successful MEPI projects between posts and the Regional Office is beneficial and should be continued and encouraged.

Improving Coordination  
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¶10. (SBU) Post stresses that MEPI regional conference invitations have worked best when distributed through the Embassy's MEPI team. The MEPI/USPTO tour for librarians worked well because Embassy officers personally identified and recruited the participants. Occasionally, the Embassy is unaware that Kuwaitis have been invited to MEPI programs, which leads to lack of coordination and misunderstandings between Embassy officers and close contacts. This unfortunately hinders Post's hard work to maintain active communication with MEPI alumni.

¶11. (SBU) Also, Post reiterates its view that MEPI should limit the recycling of MEPI program participants, which was noted in reftel D. The trend has been to offer MEPI training and program opportunities to "the usual suspects." This phenomenon limits the audience of new contacts and provides experienced participants little of value in follow-on workshops or seminars. Post aims to diversify the base of participants in democracy-building efforts, and develop more advanced and focused training topics and methods for past participants in MEPI activities.

Next Quarter News  
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¶12. (SBU) The next quarter for MEPI in Kuwait will witness the completion of the FY05 Small Grants and active participation by four candidates in the MEPI Study of the U.S. Institutes. FY06 Small Grant projects will move forward as will efforts to promote the freedom agenda and reform in multiple new directions.

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